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# THE SON OF ROYAL LANGBRITH.

BY WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS.

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## PART II.

### IX.

THE dance was coming to an end, and the girls, some of them, followed by as many young men, strayed out between the waltzes into the conservatory, to escape the heat; after trying the air, they said it was no cooler, only damper, and rushed back at the first strain of the music for the last figure of the dance. Hope Hawberk stayed, and Langbrith stayed with her. "Why don't you go back and look after your guests?" she challenged him.

"The guest that needs looking after most is here." He broke a rose from the vine at his hand, and threw it across the little fountain at her, where she stood with her head framed in the pale greenery of a jasmine bush. She lifted herself, haughtily. "May I ask what you mean, Mr. Langbrith?" Suddenly, while he stood, mystified and sobered, by the severity of her tone, she brought one hand from behind her, where she had been keeping both, and dashed a rose in his face. She tried to escape by the path that led up to the dining-room door past the callas in the oval bed about the fountain. He was instantly there to meet her, to catch her by a slim wrist and hold her fast.

"You witch!" he panted. "Oh, Hope, may I go home with you? The way we used to?"

"Before you were such a great person?"

"Why do you say that to me?" he entreated.

"Because—because you are hurting my wrist," she answered with a child's wilful inconsequence.

He released it with all but his thumb and forefinger, and bent over it as if to see what harm he had done, while she stood passive. He kissed the red marks his fingers had left.

"What next, Mr. Langbrith?" she said, with a feint of cold impersonality.

"You know! Will you let me go home with you?"

"You're making me break your mother's lilies!"

"I don't care for the lilies. I care for you, you, you! May I go home with you?"

Another dash of the fitful April rain, which seemed to have gathered again, smote the glass roof; then it began to fall steadily. "You may lend me an umbrella," she said.

"Well, if I may go along to carry it."

"Oh, if you're afraid of not getting it back!"

"Yes, I can't trust you."

"You're hurting me again. Don't make me cry. Everybody will know it," she pleaded, releasing her wrist and passing her handkerchief over her eyes, with her face turned from the doors.

"Ah, Hope!" he tried to catch her hands, but she whipped them behind her, the handkerchief still in one of them, and ran, while he followed slowly.

The rain stopped again, before the dance was ended. The old people had gone home before, and the dancers now sallied out together into the air that had softened, since nightfall, under a sky where the moon sailed in seas of blue, among islands of white cloud. The girls started chattering, laughing, with meaningless cries, massing themselves at first, and then losing themselves from the group, one by one, and finding their way homeward with the young men who seemed to fall to their share, each as by divine accident.

Langbrith and Hope Hawberk were the foremost to put a space between themselves and the others, and he pressed closer and closer to his side the hand she let lie on his arm. "Will you say it now?" he was insisting.

"No more now than ever. What good would it do, I should like to know?"

"How delicious! All the good in the world!"

"Well, I shall not. Why should you want me to be engaged to you?"

"Oh, if you'll only say you love me, we'll let the engagement go!"

"Thank you! Well, we'll let it go without my saying anything so silly."

"But I may say that I love you?"

"Yes, so long as you don't mean it."

"But I do mean it—I do, heart and soul. Hope, can't you be serious? May I write to you from Cambridge when I get back?"

"How can I help that? I suppose the mail will have to bring your letters!"

"But will you answer them?"

"Perhaps they won't need answering."

"Oh, yes, they will. I shall ask questions."

"Well, I never could answer questions. That's the one thing I can't do."

"Then you don't want me to write to you?"

"What an idea! I thought it was you that were doing the wanting."

"And I may?"

"Well, you may write *one* letter."

"Oh, how intoxicating you are, Hope!" He tried in his rapture to put his hand on hers, but it had slipped from his arm, and she was flying up the path before him. He followed after a moment of surprise; but, because she was fleet of foot, or because she had that little start of him, or because he felt the chase undignified, he did not overtake her till she had reached her gate. The little story-and-a-half house, overshadowed by two tall spruces, under the shoulder of the hill, was withdrawn only a few yards from the street, to which the gabled porch at the front door brought it a few feet nearer.

She put her hand, panting, on the gate, and he had his on her shoulder, laughing, when, with an instinct of another presence, rather than a knowledge, she turned vividly toward him, and put her hand to her lip. He checked his laughter, and at her formal "Good night," he said reluctantly, "Well, good night," and faltered outside the gate which she shut between them.

"Won't you come in, Jim?" a voice called huskily from the darkness of the little portico, and before he could formulate his "Oh, no, thank you, Mr. Hawberk, it's rather late," the figure of a man advanced from its shadow. Around this figure Hope faded into the shadow it had left.

"It's only nine," Hawberk said. "Come in, and we'll have a bottle of champagne together. I'm just up from Boston, where I've been passing a week, with some of your father's old friends: gay people. I was out at Cambridge, where I met some of the college grandees. They gave me great accounts of you. I was coming round in the morning to see your mother. She'll like to know direct from the university authorities that you are regarded as the most promising man there. I've been looking after an invention of mine, that I've succeeded in getting into good hands in Boston, and that will probably give me more money than I shall know what to do with. Have you ever thought of parting with the mills?"

"I don't believe I have, Mr. Hawberk," Langbrith responded.

"If you ever do," Hawberk said, "let me know. I've had an idea of taking them over, lately, and the income from this invention of mine will enable me to run them as they should be run. Your father and I were pretty close together in their management, at the outset, you know."

"Yes," Langbrith assented, while he retired a few steps from the gate, on which Hawberk was now lounging. In the moonlight, Hawberk's face had a greenish hue, and his eyes shone vitreously.

"There is something fine about these gloomy autumn nights," he suggested. "I sold him the mills, you recollect, and it would be sort of evening things up if you sold them back to me. Yes, your father and I were great friends. He liked to go off with me in my yacht. We made the trip to the Azores, together. I think I was the first to own a steam-yacht in Boston. I lived most of the

time in Boston, then: looked after the city end of the business. Often had your father down. I was always giving dinners, and he used to enjoy them. You and Hope been at the play? Fine company, I'm told. Pity we don't get them oftener in Saxmills."

"Ah—I think I must say good night, Mr. Hawberk." Langbrith moved a little farther away, backing. "It's rather late—"

"Is it?" Hawberk took out his watch, and held it up to the moonlight. "Why, so it is! Nearly morning. Well, good night." He did not offer to leave the gate, but remained lounging across it, while Langbrith turned and moved down the footpath toward the village.

## X.

In the morning, the dissatisfactions which are apt to qualify the satisfactions of the night before, made themselves felt in Langbrith. He had wanted to talk the satisfactions over with Falk, whom he found in bed, on his return from seeing Hope Hawberk home, with the disaster of meeting her father; but Falk was either sleepy from the fatigues of the evening, or cynical from the excess of its pleasures, and would not talk. He met Langbrith's overtures to a confidence with a prayer for rest, with a counsel of forgetting, with an aspiration for help in his extremity against him from the powers which he did not often invoke. Langbrith was obliged to go to bed himself, without the light of Falk's mind on the things which kept him turning from side to side till well toward morning. Then he slept so briefly that he woke to hear Falk still asleep in the next room, and went down alone to his breakfast.

He found his mother in the library ready to join him, and he said, rather crossly, that they would not wait for Falk, who would anyway not want anything but coffee. At first, it seemed as if he would himself not want anything else, but after he had drunk a cup he helped himself to the steak which his mother refused, and then to the rice cakes, which Norah brought in relays, till he said, "I sha'n't want any more, Norah," and then she ceased to bring them, and shut the door into the kitchen definitively after her in going out.

If Mrs. Langbrith expected her son to begin by saying something of the pleasure she had tried to give him the night before, she was destined to disappointment, less, perhaps, from his ingratitude than from his preoccupation. "Mother," he asked, in pouring the syrup over the last relay of cakes that Norah had brought, "do you know whether there was ever anything unpleasant between Dr. Anther and my father?"

She caught her breath in a way that was habitual with her at any sort of abruptness, and had a moment of hesitation in which she might have been deciding what form of evasion she should employ. Then she asked, "Why, James, what made you think so?"

"Something—nothing—that happened, or didn't happen, last night, after you left us smoking in the dining-room." Langbrith frowned, in what was resentment or what was perplexity. "It

might have been my fancy, altogether. But he seemed to receive a suggestion I made very dryly, very coldly. I had always supposed they were great friends."

Mrs. Langbrith quelled her respiration into long, smooth under-breaths, and said nothing.

Langbrith went on. "I had been thinking of something I meant to mention to you first—putting up a medallion of my father, with some sort of inscription, in the façade of the library, and last night I happened to come out with the notion in the course of some general talk, and Dr. Anther received it so blankly that I couldn't help feeling a little hurt."

"Perhaps," Mrs. Langbrith said, with a drop of her eyes, "he didn't take it in."

"That was what I have been trying to think. People began to come for the dance just after that, and the subject couldn't go any further. But, before Judge Garley and Mr. Enderby, Dr. Anther's blankness had time to be painful. Well!" he broke off from the affair. "He may not have taken it in, as you say."

Mrs. Langbrith rubbed her hand nervously up and down on the smooth, warm handle of the coffee-pot, in the struggle with herself, rather than with her son, which was renewed whenever it came to any sort of question of his father between them. She was long past the superstition of her husband's right, through the mere fact of his death, to her silence, her forbearance. Except for their son, she would have been willing that he should be known to the world as he was known to her and to Anther. But with reference to the dead man's son, it still seemed to her that the truth would be defamation, as much as if his memory were really pure and holy. It always came to some sort of evasion. But this morning, somehow, it did not seem to her as if she could consent to that any longer. It was on her tongue to say, No, his father and Dr. Anther were not friends at last, and give, swiftly and unsparingly, the reasons why they could not be. But when she spoke, she got no further than saying, and it was with tremendous effort that she got so far from her wonted reserve, "If you think there was ever anything unpleasant between them, why don't you ask Dr. Anther himself?"

There was a desperate challenge in her eyes, which she would have been miserably glad to have him see there, if only some counter of his would then push her past the silence which she could never traverse of herself alone. But he was looking down into his cup, and he did not see what was in her eyes. He stirred his coffee, and said: "It was not serious enough for that. Very likely, it wasn't anything at all. He may not have been giving the matter close attention, or he may have had something else on his mind. Doctors often have, I suppose; or he may have been vexed at something in my manner—what Falk calls my patronizing. Possibly, he was thinking from his knowledge of my father that such a thing would

be distasteful to him. But he might have left it all to me. Well, it doesn't really amount to anything."

She drew a long deep breath, in the desperate relief of postponement, and he looked up affectionately. "It's all a very old story for you, mother, and you can't take much pleasure in knowing how the evening went off. You did manage it wonderfully."

She flushed at his praise. "I tried to carry out your instructions."

"You bettered them. It was a great little triumph. Don't you think people enjoyed it?"

"Yes, I think so. But if you enjoyed it, that is quite enough for me."

"Oh, for you, mother! But I'm unselfish enough for you to wish the rest had a good time. I thought the girls all looked very pretty, and they behaved prettily, too, which doesn't always follow. Country girls—village girls—don't always know the difference between being lively and being rowdy. I'm bound to say that sometimes city girls don't, either. The latest blossoming of buds in Boston—well! Don't you think Hope is very beautiful?"

He seemed quite in good humor, now, and was smiling retrospectively. His mother said, from that remote caution, doubtless, which is in every woman where her son's relations with other women are concerned, "She is a very good girl."

Langbrith laughed out. "Well, I wasn't thinking about the goodness, exactly! But I dare say she is good. What I'm sure of, though, is that she's stunning. Mother!"

"Well, James?"

Langbrith's face, so like her own face, in its contour and features, flushed as hers always did with any strong feeling; but, whatever his feeling was, he did not put it into the words which followed as from a second impulse. He gave himself time to lose his flush, and to knit his brows, which approached very nearly together, before he asked, "How long has her father been an opium fiend? I mean, how long have people known that he eats opium?"

"A good many years, I'm afraid."

"As long back as to my father's time?"

"Yes—quite. Why, what makes you ask?"

"Oh, I saw him last night, when I went home with Hope."

"I thought he was away at the Retreat."

"It seems not. At any rate he was at home, and she didn't seem surprised at his being there. It isn't like alcoholism, is it? It doesn't make him violent? So that he ever hurts them?"

"Oh, no, not at all. Did Hope seem troubled?"

"No. She slipped into the house behind him, when he came out to the gate to talk to me. He was disposed to be rather expansive. Just in what way do you understand that he has been an affliction to them?"

"He has kept them poor."

"Well, that might be remedied. And it isn't the worst thing

that could happen. A great many people are poor and happy. You don't mean that they're ever in anything like want?"

"Oh, no," Mrs. Langbrith sighed. "He has some of his inventions in the hands of other people, who pay him a percentage on them, and it is secured so that it goes to his family, instead of to him. The worst of him is that they can't put the least dependence on him. They can't trust anything he says. He is very kind to them when he is with them, and he is proud of Hope. But they can't believe a word from him."

"He got off twenty inventions to me, in as many sentences, while we stood talking over the gate. I had a notion of something of the kind you say. Doesn't he ever blunder into the truth? He said my father and he used to be great chums. Was there nothing in that?"

"They were friends at one time, certainly."

"Until he began to give way to all kinds of invention? Then, of course, it had to come to an end. Well, it's interesting to know that he can sometimes make a straight statement. Don't think I don't feel the awfulness of it, mother. I do, and I pity Hope, and I can understand how she can't help thinking that she is put wrong by it with—people. I suppose it's that that makes her a little defiant, a little doubtful of— Have you ever, or has she ever, mentioned the subject?"

"Not to me, James, or to any one that I know of. Everybody knows it. It's an old thing, and nobody talks of it, except newcomers. And there are not many newcomers here."

"No," Langbrith assented with a smile. "Saxmills is static."

His mother may not have known just what he meant, or it may have been from the country habit of making no comment in response to what was not a question. She asked, "Will you have some more coffee, James?"

"No; but have them keep it hot for old Falk."

"I will have some fresh for him."

"There never was such thoughtful hospitality as yours, mother," Langbrith said, rising and going round the table to where she had risen too, and putting his arm fondly across her shoulders. She was almost as tall as he, and their likeness showed as he laid his face against hers and rubbed his cheek on her own. "I believe that when I wake up in the other world, you will be there to offer me something nice to eat. Old Falk is having a tremendously good time, don't you think?"

Mrs. Langbrith said, "Everything has been done for him that could be, by everybody."

"And I'm glad it's happened to Falk, too. A great many of the fellows don't know what a good fellow he is. They don't get hold of him. Falk is proud, and that makes him shy. Last year, I wouldn't have thought of bringing him here, or getting him to come here. His people out in Kentucky are Germans, and they've



always gone with the Germans. If Falk hadn't come to Harvard, he never would have got into American society. Fellows from out that way, where the Germans are rather thick, say that the third generation gets in, and sometimes the second if the first has got rich. But Falk's father is only a very musical doctor with a German practice, and no social instincts or aspirations. Of course, it's Falk's work in *Caricature* that's brought him forward with the best fellows. He's going to be a great artist, I believe, and I want to have a hand in helping him. It's difficult. He would rather say a nasty thing than a nice thing to you, and that doesn't cement friendship with everybody. But the way is not to mind it. He's all right at heart, if he wasn't so proud."

"I don't think it's very polite," Mrs. Langbrith ventured.

"Well, no," her son owned, "but it's better than being slimy."

## XI.

Langbrith and his friend took the Northern Express in the afternoon, which would bring them to Boston just in time for dinner. Mrs. Langbrith gave them such a heavy lunch, that, what with the sleep they had still to make up from the night before, they drowsed half the way to town in the smoking-car which they had to themselves, until the train began to stop at the suburban stations. Before this happened, they woke, and Falk took a sheet of crumpled paper from his pocket, and spread it on the little stationary table between them which the commuters used for playing cards.

"How would that do for the next cartoon?" he asked.

He pushed it toward Langbrith, who smoothed it out again, and examined it carefully. "I don't know what it means," he said at last.

"Neither do I," Falk said. "I want you to joke it, so that I shall."

Langbrith continued to look at the drawing, but apparently with less and less consciousness of it. He returned to it in pushing it away. "I don't know that I feel much like joking, to-day."

Falk crumpled the drawing up in his hand, and threw it on the floor. "There oughtn't to be any to-morrows. There ought to be nothing but yesterdays. Then we could manage."

"What do you mean?" Langbrith demanded.

"You're thinking you went too far."

"How do you know that?"

"I saw you going."

They were silent, and then Langbrith said, with a laugh, "Well, if I went too far, I wasn't met half-way."

"He laughs bitterly," Falk interpreted. "He has got his come-uppings."

Langbrith looked angrily at him. Then his look softened, if that is the word, into something more like sulking than anger, and he said, "Sometimes I think you hate me, Falk."

"No, you don't. You merely think you deserve it. What have you been doing? You might as well out with it now as later; I don't want you coming in to-night when I've got into my first sleep."

"If I could only hope to make you understand!" Langbrith sighed. "It isn't merely our having known each other since she and I were kids, and always been more or less together. And it isn't the country freedom between fellows and girls. You could appreciate both those things. But you're so confoundedly hard that you wouldn't see why I should feel a peculiar tenderness—a kind of longing to shield her and save her: I don't know!—when I think of her home life, and what it must be. I know what a brave fight she puts up against its seeming any way anomalous, and that makes her all the more pathetic. It makes her all the more fascinating—to a man of my temperament. She knows that, and that is why she is so defiant. I never knew she was so beautiful till this time. Weren't you struck with it yourself, Falk?"

Falk nodded, and smoked on.

"The complication of qualities in her, and the complication of her conditions, are what make it impossible to decide whether one has gone too far or not. Her way of taking it doesn't help you out a bit. She takes everything as if you didn't mean it. Of course, she knows that I'm in love with her. Everything I do tells her so, and so long as it isn't put into words, it seems all right. But when it comes to words, she won't stand it."

"She threw you down? Is that it?"

Langbrith frowned, and then smiled, as if forgiving the slang that might well have offended against the dignity of the fact. He even adopted it. "Not just threw me down, I should say."

"What happened, then?"

"Nothing. But I was in the mood for making her answer something more than she would answer, and I shouldn't have left her without, if it hadn't been for her father coming on the scene. He was an element that I hadn't counted on, and he made the whole thing luridly impossible. He seemed to cast the malign shadow of his own perdition over her."

"Good phrase," Falk murmured.

"Oh, don't mock me, old fellow!" Langbrith implored. "Of course, his being what he is wouldn't make me give her up, though I believe it would make her give *me* up. Poor wretch! You can't think how amusing he was, with the wild romances he got off to me by the dozen in the two or three minutes we talked together. Do you remember that wonderful liar in one of Thackeray's stories, or sketches, who says he has just come from the Russian embassy in London, where he had seen a Russian princess knouted by secret orders of the Czar? It was something like that. That fellow must have been an opium-eater, too. One good thing about it," Langbrith resumed, after a pause not broken by Falk, "my mother

thinks the world of Hope. She's always having her at the house, when she will come. I think she does it because my father was his friend in his better days, and she feels that he would like to have her do it. She is just so loyal to his memory. If she could imagine any wish for him, now, after twenty years, I believe she would want to carry it out, the same as if he were alive."

Falk still said nothing, and Langbrith broke off to say, "There was something that gravelled me last night, a little. I don't know whether you noticed it."

"What was it?"

"Well, Dr. Anther's snubbing way of meeting what I said of that medallion of my father which I suggested for the public library. It embarrassed me before the judge, and Dr. Enderby; it made me feel like a fool. He had no business to do it. But, perhaps, he was merely not noticing. All the same, I'm going to do it. I think it's a shame that in a place which a man has done so much for as my father did for Saxmills, there shouldn't be any public record of him. I'll do it to show them they ought to have done it themselves, if for nothing else. But I know all this bores you," Langbrith ended, vexed with his evident failure to interest his friend.

Falk yawned, but he said, with more than the usual scanty kindness he showed for the wounds of Langbrith's vanity, "No, no, I'm just stupid from last night. One doesn't have such a good time for nothing."

"It *was* a good time, wasn't it?" Langbrith gratefully exulted.

Falk said, "Fine." He yawned again, and Langbrith lapsed into a smiling muse, in which he was climbing the hill with Hope Hawberk, flattered in the fondness she suffered him to show her, and sweetly contraried by her refusal to say the words which would have sealed the bond between them. Was it, he wondered, with a swelling throat, because she wished to let him feel himself wholly free, in the event of some disgrace or disaster to herself from her father? He would live to prove that he would not be free: that he was hers as she was his, and nothing on earth could part them. That would make right, it would consecrate, all his past love-making. Once he would have thought that no harm, if it had come to nothing. But now, in his knowledge of another world, with a different code, it was not to be thought of but as part of a common future for them which it began. He wanted to put the case concretely before Falk, but he could not. He could not generalize, as he would have liked to do, on that difference of code between city and country, with the risk of Falk's making his abstractions concrete in some such way as only a blow could answer. Falk had his limitations. After all, he was only half an American, and he could only half understand an American's feelings. He retreated from the temptation, and lost himself in a warm revery of the future, which he forecast in defiance of every obstacle.

He thought what friends Hope and his mother had always been, and he knew that there could be nothing but glad response in his mother's heart to the feeling that was in his for Hope. Then he began to think of his mother apart from Hope, and of what she might have been like when she was a girl. She was not much older than Hope when she was married. She had been many more years a widow than a maid; and, in the light of his own love for Hope, he wondered if his mother had ever thought of marrying again. His father had been twice her age when he married her. Langbrith knew this in the casual way in which children know something of their parents' history, and his father must have been an uncommon man to have won her with that difference of years between them, and to have kept her constant to his memory so many years after his death. After all, how little she had ever said of him! Langbrith romanced her as not being able, from deep feeling, from a grief ever new, to speak of him, and he ached at heart to think how his father's personality seemed buried in his grave with his body. A tender, chivalrous longing to champion his forgotten father, to rehabilitate this vanished personality, replaced his heart-ache, and again he was indignant with Dr. Anther for his indifference, his coldness. He said to himself that he must have an explanation from Dr. Anther; he would write to him, and ask just what he meant. Perhaps, he meant nothing. But he must be sure. Then he would see that young sculptor, that Italian, and tell him what he wanted; talk it over with him; find if he had any notions of his own.

The train slowed into the North station about five o'clock, just when he knew that his mother would be talking with old Norah about the supper, to which, in his absence, she would revert from the late dinner. She would be bidding Norah tell the cook that she did not want anything but a cup of tea and a little milk-toast. Poor old mother! What a savorless, limp life she lived there alone! Yet it could not be otherwise, when he was away. How much she depended upon him. Somehow, he must manage for her to live with Hope and him. She must go out to Paris with them, where they should go after their marriage, and when they came back to Saxmills, where they would always have their summer home, she must be put back mistress in the old house.

## XII.

The neighbor over the way who saw Anther drop the hitching-weight of his buggy in front of the Langbrith house, late in the afternoon of the lengthening April day, decided that Mrs. Langbrith had been overdoing. She watched for him to come out, until she could stay no longer at the window without making her own tea late, but she did not see him come out at all.

In fact, it was the doctor who appeared to have been overdoing. He looked so tired to Mrs. Langbrith, that she asked him if he would

not have a cup of tea. Upon second thought, she asked him if he would not have it with her. Supper would be ready very soon; and, without waiting for a refusal, she went into the kitchen to hurry it, and to have the cook add something to the milk-toast for the man-appetite, to which her hospitality was ministering with more impulsiveness and spontaneity than the wont of village hospitality is.

When they sat down together at the table, he did not eat much and he talked little; but he seemed to feel gratefully the comfort of the place and presence. She came into authority with him, as a woman does when the man dear to her is depressed. Her affection for him came out in little suggestions and insistencies about the food. Like most physicians, he kept his precepts for himself and his practices for his patients. He now ate rather recklessly, and he preferred the unwholesome things. At first, she had to press him, and then she had to check him. At last, she had to say to Norah, who came in with successive plates of the hot cakes which he devoured, "That will do, Norah," and, when he had swept the final batch upon his plate and soaked them in butter and syrup, and then cut their layers into deep vertical sections, and gorged these with a kind of absent gluttony, while she looked on in patient amaze, she rose and led the way from the table into the parlor.

It lay beyond the library and had windows to the north and east. The library was lighted from the east alone, like the dining-room in the wing. The main house was square, and divided by an ample hall from front to back. Beyond the hall, the two drawing-rooms opening from it balanced the parlor and library. There was a fire of logs burning on the parlor hearth, and its glow alone lighted the place when the two came into it. He went first to the window and looked at his horse. When he came away, she pulled down the curtains, and shut out what was left of the pale day and the disappointment of the neighbor who had been waiting for the reappearance of the persons of a drama not played for her.

Mrs. Langbrith took the chair at the corner, and invited Anther to the deeper one in front of the fire by her action.

"I oughtn't to stay," he said, looking at his watch. But he sat down. Neither of them made haste to take up any talk for the entertainment of the other. What they were to say was to come because they were both thinking the same things, from interests that were no longer separable. Yet he began with as great apparent remoteness as possible from their common interests. "Hawberk is at home again," he said, as if that followed from his saying he ought not to stay.

"James told me," she responded. "He saw him last night."

"And he has begun again."

"Yes, I knew that from the way that James said he talked. It doesn't seem much use his ever going."

"It prolongs his life, if that's any use. If he hadn't pulled up

completely, from time to time, he would have been dead ten years ago. It is a curious case. Mostly they keep on and on, till they kill themselves, but Hawberk seems disposed to see how much relief can be got out of it with the least danger. At the rate he is going, he can live as long as anybody. Of course, the moral effect always follows the indulgence of a morbid appetite. What did he say to James?"

"He just told him some of his wild stories. He boasted of being Mr. Langbrith's greatest friend."

"So he was, in a kind of way. An involuntary friend," Anther said, with a smile. She smiled too, strangely enough, but as people can smile, in dealing with an old wrong when it offers an ironical aspect to them. But she said, "Sometimes I wish it could be known what a deadly enemy Mr. Langbrith had been to him. Why shouldn't I tell it? I ought to feel guilty for not telling it. He robbed him, as much as if he had taken his money out of his pocket."

"No doubt about that; and once it might have been best to own the fact publicly. But sometimes it seems to me that time is past. A wrong like that seems to gather a force that enslaves those who have done nothing worse than leave it unacknowledged through a good motive. You haven't been silent for your own sake."

"I am not sure it hasn't been for my own sake."

"I am."

"I wonder," she said, "that Mr. Hawberk hasn't told it himself."

"Well, possibly, he thinks that it wouldn't be credited, that it would be regarded as one of his wild inventions; that is, he thinks that when he is in his soberer moments. When he is under the influence of the drug, he likes to make pleasing romances, and has no desire to mix a tragical ingredient in them."

"Then Mr. Langbrith has ruined a soul!"

"Yes," Anther admitted, "he has done something like that. And the most terrible thing is, that he holds the man in bondage now much more securely than he could have held him living. If they were both still alive, there would be some means of righting the wrong that has been done. Some pressure could be brought upon him to make him do Hawberk justice."

"No, no, he would know how to get out of that." She rose and closed the door opening into the library. She had meant to do it quietly, and without self-betrayal; but, in the nervous stress that was on her, she brought it to with a clash, and then she felt obliged to explain: "It always seems as if it were listening," and Anther knew that she meant the portrait over the library mantel.

"At any rate," the doctor resumed, "he makes it hard for you to do him justice now. You do the best you can, and perhaps it is the best that any one could do. I suppose that a moralist, like Enderby, for instance, would say that the secrecy which Hawberk's

misfortune promotes is the worst part of it. You pay Hawberk an income from a stolen invention, and he goes about bragging of the inventions which he has in the hands of Boston capitalists. Perhaps, it is not even possible for him to tell the truth, in the perversion of his nature through his habit."

"What was he like before he took to it, Dr. Anther?" she asked, from the security she felt in shutting out the portrait. "I know that he took it up in the misery he felt at being trapped and robbed, and it was his only escape."

"Do you mean, whether he was inclined some such way?"

"I have sometimes wished that he were."

"He may have been," the doctor mused. "I knew him very little before I came here. But there is a sort of crime, isn't there, in pushing a man in the direction of a natural propensity? You don't want to palliate what was done?"

"Mr. Langbrith was capable of any crime," she answered. "Sometimes I have to shield his memory. But I don't wish to do it when I needn't. That is the comfort, the rest, of talking with you. I can't tell you what a kind of awful happiness it is to say out to you the things I cannot say to any one else. You will think I am crazy, but the next greatest happiness I have is in hoping that his fancy is taken with her, and that somehow it can be made up to them in that way. And yet there is a ghastliness in that, too, that is awful."

He knew that now she was talking of her son and of Hawberk's daughter. When she added, "She ought to know, at least," he said:

"Oh, everybody ought to know. But it is no more possible for her to be told than for any one else. I should be glad if he could get so good a girl. She is a beautiful creature, too, as well as good. Well!"

He rose from his chair, but from hers she entreated almost unawares, "Oh, don't go! Or, I oughtn't to say it!"

"No, Amelia, you oughtn't. If you said something else, I need never go." He looked at her sadly, and her head drooped. "You let me see an image of home, like this, and then you take it from me. Well! I must submit. Good night." He put out his hand to her, but she would not take it.

She lifted her eyes to his, "You haven't asked me if I tried to speak to James. I didn't!"

"I knew that."

"Perhaps I should—perhaps I should have tried, this morning, when we were alone, if— But perhaps I couldn't."

"If what?"

"If he hadn't fancied that you did something last night that showed dislike of Mr. Langbrith."

"What was it I did?"

"Something in the way you received his suggestion of the memorial tablet."

"Oh, he noticed that! Well, I couldn't help it."

"I know you couldn't. Do you think I blame you?"

"I believe we don't blame each other, Amelia."

"And you don't feel hard towards me for not trying?"

"I didn't expect you to try."

"But why shouldn't we go on like this—the way we have gone on for twenty years? Why shouldn't you be just my friend as long as you live? We are not young, and we couldn't expect what young people expect of marriage."

"I expect a great deal more," he said. "You are solitary, and so am I. I have never had a home, and you could give me one. I have never had companionship at the time when a man wants it most, and you could be my companion. I want some one to talk to and to be silent to, when I feel the need of either. You could be my daughter, my mother, my sister. Why do you make me say these things to you?"

"Well, then, why not come and let me be it here? Why not come and make this your home? I know James wouldn't object. I believe he would like to have you live with us. He has always been used to you—" Another shook his head.

"Yes, yes," she persisted. "We could give you all the room you wanted in the house here, and you could have Mr. Langbrith's office for your office, out there by the gate. I have thought how it could be done—"

"It couldn't be done, Amelia. The talk it would make in a place like Saxmills!"

"There wouldn't be any talk. You have been here so long, and you are so respected. You have always been our doctor, and you have been in and out here day and night. You are like one of the family. You could come now, when Mrs. Burwell is going to give up her house, and you will have to go somewhere else, anyhow. It hasn't made talk your living there with her all these years, and why should your living here do it? Sit down now, and let me tell you—"

She had put her hand, unconsciously, on his arm and was nervously pinching the sleeve. He took her hand away and held it in his own. "I never think of Mrs. Burwell, nor she of me; but we two would always be thinking of each other. It wouldn't do, my dear, and you know it."

She broke out piteously, "I am so afraid of James!"

"Yes, I understand that, and I should be afraid of him, too, if I came here to live with you, unless I came as your husband. In that case, I shouldn't be afraid of him."

"Ah, you hate him! I can see it by the way you say that. What shall I do?"

"Nothing, Amelia, except be reasonable. I don't hate your son; how could I? Of course, your fear of him stands in our way, but I am not at all sure that *he* does. He might have done so, a few years ago, but there is less probability that he would, now."



"How do you mean?"

"He is more rational. He is of a nature that matures late; he is like you, in that, Amelia. That friend of his, that young man told me how slowly James has won upon the liking and understanding of his college mates. They did not like him at first, but now, in his last year, they are beginning to value him, to make allowances for what repelled them, to see how he has changed, and to have an affection for him." In his gloss of Falk's laconic terms, Anther did not feel that he was misinterpreting his statement of Langbrith's Harvard standing; his mother eagerly accepted the version, and imagined it insufficient. "I say this," the doctor went on, "merely to illustrate my meaning. He is now at the age when the mind acts with an insight unknown to it before, and besides—" Anther broke off, and then asked, after a moment, "What reason have you for thinking that he is seriously taken with Hope? How is it different with them from what it has always been?"

"I don't know. Perhaps it is his being away, and then coming back, and finding her changed into a new person. Girls change so suddenly at her age. If he had stayed at home, they might have gone on being boy and girl together always. But as it is— Perhaps it is partly the way I have seen him look at her—with a kind of surprise. And, this morning, he spoke of her with so much— Oh, if it only could be, what a load it would take off my heart!"

"It would take the main obstacle out of our path, too," Anther responded. "He would judge you somewhat more from himself."

Mrs. Langbrith colored faintly, with a kind of shame, which he saw and resented.

"You think it isn't the same thing!"

"No," she owned. "How could I? It is as right for us, though it is different, as it is for them. But—"

She stopped, and even after he had said "Well?" she did not go on immediately.

Then she shook her head, and added, "It wouldn't get over the great obstacle. There would still be—Mr. Langbrith."

"Then," said Anther, harshly, "we must remove that obstacle, that incubus, ourselves. That man's memory mustn't be allowed to be a lifelong nightmare to you. You suffered enough from him when he was alive. We must tell James about him."

"I couldn't."

"Then you must let me."

She slowly turned her head away. "It's too late," she sighed.

"No. Now is just the time. Before this, it would have been too soon. While he was a child, you could not have told him; I understand that; and you had to let him grow up in the superstition of such a father as he imagines. But now he is old enough and strong enough to have his fetish taken from him. You owe it to him to take it. Put me out of the question entirely. I will never speak to you again of what I wish—"

"Oh, do you think that would be any help?" she lamented.

"At any rate, it is the boy's right to know the truth now."

"I always," she tried to evade him, "hoped that some accident—"

"But it never did. And it never will. That isn't the way of accident. It doesn't manage beneficent surprises."

"It is too late. I can't let you tell him the truth, and I can't myself. It must be covered up, more and more! It must be hidden forever. But there is something—something you might do, and you could do it."

"For you?"

"For him—for me."

"Of course, I will do it."

"I don't know. You could help him—help me. What harm would there be in your humoring the child?"

"How, humoring him?"

"Why shouldn't you encourage him—why should you oppose him in putting up that tablet? Or not that! Why should you be so cold with him about it?"

Anther walked out into the hall, and got his hat and coat from the rack there, before he spoke. "Amelia!" he cried with a sternness that he let die out of his voice before he added, "Oh, poor woman! That scoundrel has had power to corrupt even you, even now."

He opened the outer door, and, while she stood on the threshold of the parlor, with entreating hands stretched towards him, he closed the door behind him without looking back at her.

### XIII.

Mrs. Burwell came to call Dr. Anther to breakfast as soon as she heard him in his office. He had been up late overnight, and, with the fretful patience which had not failed her in twenty years of obedience, she had obeyed his instructions not to call him in such a case at the established hour of seven. His breakfast was always ready at seven, and it would have been some consolation to give him his breakfast cold, if he ever noticed whether it was cold or hot, but he did not, and she failed of this comfort. Among the reasons which had decided her at last to give up housekeeping and go to live with her married daughter in Nashua, the irregularity of Dr. Anther at breakfast would have been found first by any one who cared to study them, but it was one which she urged last upon the inquirer's attention. She said that it had been clearly agreed upon at the beginning, and that she was not one to take back her word.

He sat before his desk opening his letters, with his revolving bookcase by his side, and, in the long case between the two windows behind him, the pendulent skeleton which he had bought with his practice, from his predecessor. When the case was closed, it looked like a grandfather's clock in shape, and when it was open it still suggested the intimate relation of time and death. There

was a table in the room, and over this were scattered medical periodicals, and other publications more suited to the taste and intelligence of patients waiting for his return when he was out. There were some hard chairs which did not invite their fancy from the stern realities of life by luxurious appeals to the senses.

"Lorenzo Hawberk's b'en here," Mrs. Burwell complained to the back of the doctor's bowed head. "He said he would call in again. I don't know but what you'll find your coffee pretty cold," she lamented farther.

"I'll be there in a minute," Anther said, still without lifting his head, and, when he had quite finished with his morning's mail, he followed her vanishing into the hall without, and thence into the dining-room.

If he had been the sort of man to realize the order of facts to which any article of food belonged by its condition, he would have found not only his coffee cold, but his biscuit and his steak cold too. But he was only vaguely aware of something wrong, as a child is, when it is in discomfort, and his sense extended itself still more vaguely to an impression of the room, and of Mrs. Burwell herself. They were both severely neat, and they were both of the same material and spiritual sparseness. Beginning with the hard little knot which Mrs. Burwell's silver sanded hair was tightly drawn up into, away from her face, a more than classic temperance of ornament was characteristic of both. In her and in the room, everything was designed and disposed with a view to not catching dust. The clock on the mantel, supported by two Japanese fans, and the four prints on the four walls, representing severally the Lincoln Family at Breakfast, the Battle of Gettysburg, the long-extinct husband of Mrs. Burwell, and the United States Senate listening to the speech of Mr. Webster of Massachusetts in reply to Mr. Hayne of South Carolina, united with the sideboard, on which there was nothing that could not be shut away in its drawers the moment the breakfast things were washed up, in preserving a condition which not only would not catch dust, but in which there was no dust to catch.

"Did he leave any word?" Dr. Anther answered, not troubling himself to name Hawberk in his question.

"No, he just said he would be back; there was nothing particular the matter. I suppose he's begun again."

Hawberk's habit was so notorious in Saxmills that Mrs. Burwell felt it no violation of that other convention between herself and her tenant, dating from the beginning, like the agreement in regard to breakfast, that she was not to offer any sort of comment upon his patients, their characters, their ailments or affairs. All the same, he snubbed her by his tacit refusal to enter into the case of Hawberk with her.

"Have you heard from your daughter again, Mrs. Burwell?" he asked.

"No, I hain't," she said with an effect of being resolved to have no concealments. "But, as far forth as that goes, I don't know as I expected to."

"Then you are still decided to go to her?"

"Well, yes, I suppose I am," she said as little decidedly in words as a woman well could.

"Supposing won't do," Anther pursued. "I must know whether you really intend to go or not, for I must find some other quarters if you do, and I want time."

"Well, then, I *am*. I suppose I said 'suppose' because I didn't want to seem to be hurrying you up any."

"You'll hurry me up if you don't give me due notice."

Mrs. Burwell's hard mouth and hard eyes joined in the adamant response which she made. "I'm goin' to leave this house the first day of July, no sooner and no later, as far as I can humanly fix it."

"Oh, well, then," Anther said, "that gives me plenty of time to look about. I thought you were going in June."

"Well," she admitted reluctantly, and without that bravado of frankness which she had shown before, "I did some think of goin' in June, and I did think I might as well stay the summer out here. It's full more comfortable than what it is in Nashua, with the heat, and it's easier to begin in a new place where you've got to be shut up a good deal, anyway, by beginnin' in the fall of the year."

"Yes, that is so," the doctor granted, and Mrs. Burwell chose to read a sympathy into his words which they did not express.

"I presume that I shall feel the change, and I presume you will, some."

"Yes, I shall hate the moving."

"That's what I mean. And I wonder you want to move. Why don't you take the house yourself? It'll be to rent when I give it up. You could keep your old rooms here, and get somebody in to do for you—I don't know but what Orlando himself could. He's real handy about a house, and he knows your ways—till you could get somebody to take the rest of the house. You could meal out; you're so irregular, anyway. I declare I feel bad about breakin' you up here, and I don't like to have anybody comin' in that I don't know."

"Thank you, Mrs. Burwell," Anther said to the part of her speech that demanded thanks from him.

"I don't, one bit," she continued with the other part. "And still I don't want to have it, as you may say, layin' empty."

"No, it would be a certain expense, and you would get no return from it."

"Yes, and a house wears out faster when it's empty. I'd be willing to let it to anybody that would take good care of it for two hundred and fifty a year."

"That would be reasonable."

"Why, it wouldn't hardly more than pay the repairs and taxes,"

Mrs. Burwell urged. "I shouldn't expect to make anything on it, though goodness knows I need to, with everything as dear as they say it is to Nashua. I expect to pay good board to my daughter, though I presume I shall do enough about the house to make up without payin' anything."

"Well, I'll see about it."

"So do." Mrs. Burwell did not rise, but stretched her long arm across the table for the doctor's plate; she cleaned it into her own, and began to put the table in order for his uncertain dinner before he left the room. He went out of the side door upon a back porch, where Mrs. Burwell considered it neater to do certain parts of her housework than indoors, and more convenient for the disposal of pea-pods, squash seeds, and all kinds of cores and peelings, as well as those bits of refuse from fowls and butcher's meat, which she could throw to the hens, netted into their yard beside the stable, without having contaminated her kitchen with them. She preferred to work there not only in summer, but as far into the winter as she could bear the cold, and wrapt up as to her head and shoulders she defied the elements till after Thanksgiving and well towards Christmas. Her back yard, between this porch and the stable, was as clean as the front yard, which dropped from the terrace where the house stood, and sloped three yards and no more to the white paling fence in the gloom of four funereal firs, cropped upwards, as their boughs died of their own denseness, till their trunks showed as high as the chamber windows. The house was painted of a whiteness which age had never been suffered to soften, but was as coldly fresh as the green of the shutters; it had been there thirty years, but it stood as prim and new to the eye in every detail as if it had been finished the week before. Mrs. Burwell herself never appeared in the front yard except to pick up the fir twigs dropped in the spindling grass that bearded the terrace; in the immediate shadow of the trees no grass grew, and the ground was matted with the dark-brown decay of their spray and spills, and looked as if it were burnt over.

Dr. Anther, noted that his buggy must have been driven to the front gate, since there were no signs of it at the stable door, and he walked round the house, and looked up at its frigid façade with a novel interest. It had been long since he had looked at it, though he had daily gone in and out, and had slept in the northeast chamber, ever since he had been Mrs. Burwell's lodger. A certain shallowness of the structure now appeared to him, and he realized that the front was but one room deep on each side of the door, and that it shrank behind into the ell which imperfectly supported its pretensions of squareness, by stretching into an indefinite extent of kitchen and woodshed beyond the dining-room. He perceived that he had the two best rooms, but that the parlor, and the chamber above it, which was kept as a guest-room, though he could not remember when there had been a guest in it, were as large, if not as

pleasant, as his own. From the fact of back stairs, he had always inferred a chamber over the dining-room, and he had conjectured something of the sort in the sloping roof of the kitchen. There were then eight rooms in all, and it did not seem to Anther, though he gave the matter no very distinct thought, that there were too many for the money that Mrs. Burwell proposed getting for it in a place like Saxmills. He dropped his cursory glance from the façade to the front door, and noted with the sort of novel interest that the whole had inspired, the name of Justin Anther, M.D., on its small, glass-framed plate, and then he went indoors.

There was some one waiting for him in his office, and he said "Ah, Hawberk!" in greeting of the presence which he had inferred from the legs he had first seen, as they stretched across the perspective of the doorway.

The man got to his feet with a certain alertness, which was more like a reminiscence of past activity than an actual fact, and offered the doctor a wasted hand. He looked shrunk within his clothes, and his greenish-brown complexion, blotched with patches of deeper brown, where the skin showed above the lustreless beard, was lighted with eyes which were still beautiful, though their black was dimmed by the suffering through which they had sunk into their cavernous sockets.

"Good morning, Doctor," Hawberk said, and he added courteously, "I hope to see you well?"

"I'm fairly well," Anther said, facing round in his swivel-chair, which he had taken at once. "Sit down, won't you? When did you get back?"

"Oh, I've been back some time—about a fortnight, I should say. But I've been pretty busy, with a little thing of mine that I'm working at, and I haven't been about the town much."

"I hope my old friend Fredericks was able to do for you what you wanted?"

"Oh, yes, oh, yes," Hawberk answered, nervously, but with a vagueness that did not seem to belong with the quickness. "He set me up. I'm all right now."

"Gone back to it since your return?"

"Well, no. I can't say that, exactly. Still I don't think it's well to make an entire break. I think the tonic effect is good, don't you?"

"Perhaps. If you don't make it too tonic. How much have you got back to?"

"Well, it ain't worth mentioning. Two or three spoonfuls after meals, and as many more at night."

"Dreams all they ought to be?"

"Oh, yes, they're all right, now. I'm out of that pit that used to give me so much trouble. I don't have to keep digging at it the whole night now, as I used to before I went to the Retreat. Dr. Fredericks pulled me out of that fairly well. There is a small

matter of old bones and a skull or two," Hawberk added with a jocosity that did not make Anther smile. "But the great thing is that I understand it's a dream even while I'm dreaming it, and I guess I shall be able to break it up if I keep realizing it. And it doesn't seem to last so long. I think that's a decided gain, don't you?"

"It's not a loss," the doctor admitted.

"It's a fighting chance, and I'm taking all the fighting chances there are. I've fairly got the upper hand. If you were to tell me to leave the whole thing off, I could do it, and not turn a hair."

Anther made no answer, and Hawberk sank from his bragging note into a dull, confused tone, as he rubbed his hand over his forehead tremulously. "There was something I wanted to tell you about—"

The doctor prompted him after a moment's wait, "Anything about your condition?"

"No, no." As if he could not recall the thing he was groping for, Hawberk said, with a sort of provisionality, "I stopped in Boston on my way up yesterday, and saw that man who has my new patent in hand. He's a great fellow, and he's working it for all its worth. He's sold territory over the whole country, and up into Canada. Why, Doctor, he's got twenty thousand dollars for the Canadian rights alone, up to date, and I come in for a clean half of the money! I'm going to build, this spring. I've as good as bought that hill back of my house—got an option on it—and I'm going to build up there and keep the old place where we are for a shop. Have a walk slanting down to it over the corner of the hill, but have the main entrance to the new place by a flight of stone steps from the street. Have the whole front of the hill terraced. I've got a landscape architect in Boston studying it out for me. I was telling Jim Langbrith about it last night. He brought Hope home from the party at his mother's, and we got talking, and— Oh, yes. Now I know what it is I wanted to speak with you about, Doctor. It's a very confidential matter, and I don't know anybody that I'd like to trust with it except you. You at their house last night?"

"Yes," Anther owned.

"Well, all right. I couldn't go with Hope myself, for I had that man up from Boston that's handling my new patent. Had to send Mrs. Langbrith an excuse by Hope. But you saw them together, didn't you? And what did you think? Think there was anything serious? I mean in Hope. Because I know there is in him. He asked me last night if I had any objections to their getting married as soon as he is out of college. I haven't talked with Hope, and I don't know, except from him, how she feels."

Hawberk tried to fix Anther with the dull eyes that had once been brilliantly black and bold, but now seemed to slip in their glance, and he paused in the monologue which was like sleep-talking, a continuous babble, unbroken in its flow by the questions that interspersed it.

The doctor rubbed his chin and stared back at him. "Are you sure of what you say, Hawberk?"

"Sure!"

"Because, you know, you sometimes can't tell the facts from the dreams."

"Oh, but I can this time. I couldn't be mistaken about a thing like that. What do you advise me to do? I've got plenty of means to meet the Langbriths half-way on any money proposition. As things are going with me now, I could give Hope a hundred thousand dollars the day she was married. And Jim Langbrith comes of good old stock. I consider his mother the finest lady I ever met, and he's his mother all over again—looks like her, talks like her, *walks* like her. I haven't forgot how she used to come up and nurse my poor wife, and it would be kind of appropriate having the two families brought together again, the same as Langbrith and I used to be in business. Well, now I'd like to get your opinion, doctor. I haven't spoken to my mother-in-law yet, because if the thing doesn't strike you favorably I don't want it to go any farther. I want to stop it right here." He lowered his voice from the high note to which it had been climbing back, and looked round him furtively. "You don't think there's any likelihood of that little green fellow coming back? I can get along now with the bones and the skulls, but that dwarf—"

"Have you seen him again?" Anther asked, soberly.

"No, not what you may call *seen*. But I feel as if I might, any minute."

"Well, you know there's no more reality in him than there is in those other things."

"Yes, I understand that."

"But you *will* see him, if you get to letting yourself go."

"Yes," Hawberk assented with a long breath. "If he wasn't green—kind of mouldy—" He stared, and after a moment he said, "What I want is something that will take me out of myself, good and strong."

Anther was apparently not heeding. He said sharply, "Hawberk! Can you carry your mind back to that old difficulty between you and James's father?"

Hawberk glanced at the doctor, slyly. "What old difficulty?"

"You must know. When you first began to lose sleep, and took up this habit."

The slyness passed into vagueness, then the vagueness gathered itself into a look of fury, which lost itself with the words in which it exploded: "Damn him!"

"Yes. Just what was it?" Anther pursued.

The vagueness came back, and then the slyness. "Why, there wa'n't anything that you may call a difficulty, doctor. All that's past and gone. We both agreed not to say anything more about it. He never did, and I haven't. Ever strike you that that skull of



mine—that one I’ve had so much trouble with—looked like— Well, I’ve been thinking, since I saw Jim, last night—”

Anther shook his head, kindly. “That’s your fancy, Hawberk. But you did feel injured, badly used at the time, didn’t you? Try to think. You know you used to tell me things very different from those you have got to saying since, and I have a reason for wishing to find out the original facts, just now. They may have a bearing on an important matter—important to us both. You put in your invention, didn’t you, and then he forced you out?”

Hawberk looked down and passed his hand over his forehead. “There was something like that. But he paid me a good round sum for the invention, and a big bonus for going out, didn’t he?”

“You ought to know. Was that really the case, or is it what you’ve imagined since?”

“Why, I should say it was the case.” A fear, the look of a man at some time deeply intimidated, supplanted the slyness in Hawberk’s blotched-brown visage. “It’s a thing I’ve agreed not to talk about. He lets me alone because I don’t. He’s got my promise, and I’ve got his. If I didn’t keep my word, he would be over the wall the first time I fell asleep. You don’t catch *me*.”

“Come! come!” Anther said, severely. “You mustn’t talk that kind of nonsense to me. I tell you, I am quite in earnest, and I would like to know the bottom facts. You needn’t be afraid of trusting me with them. You know, as well as I do, the unreality of those troubles of yours. They come from opium, and from nothing else. Now, was there any hold that Langbrith had on you, enabling him to force your consent to going out of the business, and giving him the entire usufruct of your invention? I want you to answer that fairly and squarely. Was there, or wasn’t there?”

Hawberk passed his hand over his tormented brow again. “There was something, Doctor. It’s strange. It seems as if there was a hold I had on him. But it must have been a hold he had on me. I can’t straighten that out. That appears to be the trouble with me. I don’t see why I didn’t use the hold if I was the one that had it, unless—unless it was something about Mrs. Langbrith. Do you suppose it was? She had been good to my wife; she took care of her in those last days— Oh, my God, how they come back! Doctor, do you wonder I took to it? To get a little sleep! Once I went a fortnight without knowing I had any, if I had any. It was hell. Nothing since from the opium— Ah, I can’t think it out!”

“Try,” Anther insisted. “It is very essential.” He rose from his chair, and began to walk restively up and down the room, while Hawberk lay dreamily staring at the windows, which Anther’s person showed itself against, now one and now the other, as he paced to and fro. “I—I don’t know but I’m getting it,” he began. The doctor’s foot struck a plank that gave under it, and the door of the long case fell softly open. Hawberk scrambled to his feet with a shuddering cry. “Oh, for God’s sake, what’s that?”

"You know—you know well enough!" Anther shouted. "Don't be a fool! It's that old skeleton that you've seen a hundred times. I've had it ever since I've been here, and Hillward before me. Now, do have a little sense. It's a *real* one, and it can't bother you like those fancy ones of yours."

He went up to Hawberk, and put his hands on him to stay his trembling. "What—what does a man want to keep a thing like that around for?" Hawberk faltered out, helpless to take his eyes from the quivering thing that slightly turned as it dangled. "Shut it up!"

Anther obeyed, and Hawberk dropped nervelessly into his chair. "Lord, I don't see how I'm to get home."

The doctor looked at him grimly, then pityingly, then despairingly, as to any hope of further light from him then on the point he wished to clear. "I'm driving up your way. I'll take you. There's my buggy at the door."

"Oh, thank you, doctor," Hawberk said, and he found strength to follow him out into the hall where his hat and coat hung, and got out of the house first.

*(To be Continued.)*